

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 23, 2010

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Delegations re Possible School Closures

ORIGINATOR: B. Coggles, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE

STAFF: Anne Sherwood

INFORMATION

The following three groups have requested the opportunity to appear before the Board to make presentations with respect to possible school closures:

- Delegation from Community Response to Urban Disorder (CRUD) re Parkdale School
- Delegation from the Multicultural Health Brokers Coop re McCauley School
- Delegation from the Muttart Foundation re McCauley School

Representatives of the three groups met with the Administration in accordance with the requirements of Board Policy JAB.BP - Comments, Delegations and Presentations at Board Meetings by Public and Staff Representatives. Arrangements have been made for the delegations to make their presentations to the board on Tuesday, March 23, 2010 at 8:00 p.m. The three groups have been advised of the Board's procedures with respect to delegations.

1. Delegation from Community Response to Urban Disorder (CRUD) re Parkdale School

The group is proposing the development of a partnership between the community group Community Response to Urban Disorder (CRUD), a Neighbourhood Empowerment Team (N.E.T., the Edmonton Police Service and other youth focused groups) with Parkdale School providing space and access to the gym during and after school.

Mr. Chris Hayduk and Ms Michelle Fillion, Program Manager Neighbourhood Empowerment Team (N.E.T.) will be the spokespersons for the group. The group will provide a copy of their brief to the Trustees at the board meeting.

2. Delegation from the Muticultural Health Brokers Coop re McCauley School

The group will provide information regarding the role of McCauley School in the life of newcomers to Canada who live the area and share some ideas as to future possibilities and collaborations around the school as a centre of intercultural excellence.

Ms Donna-Mae Ford, Project Developer Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative and Mr. Kelly Henning, Planning and Evaluation Coordinator, ABC Headstart (a supporting partner with MCHB Coop) will be the spokespersons for the delegation. A copy of the delegation's brief is attached (APPENDIX I).

3. Delegation from the Muttart Foundation re McCauley School

The group will address matters that relate specifically to the proposed closure of McCauley School and more generally to matters relating to the closure of schools in established neighbourhoods that serve vulnerable or marginalized populations.

Dr. Christopher Smith and Dr. Jeff Bisanz of the Muttart Foundation will be the spokespersons for the group. The group will provide a copy of their brief to the Trustees at the board meeting.

AS:mmf

Who We Are

The Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative (MCHB Coop) initiated a conversation with some key partners within McCauley about the potential for a Centre for Intercultural Excellence.

We, and our partners, are community-based service organizations who work “on the ground” in McCauley, and have significant professional expertise about and connections to the community. Collectively, we serve a significant number of families who have children attending McCauley school.

MCHB Coop supports immigrant and refugee families isolated because of cultural and linguistic barriers; via programs in health, family support, and education. We have worked cooperatively with the EPSB for the past 5 years; most recently on the advisory committee for the EPSB Transitional Program. We have 40 Brokers working throughout the City of Edmonton, serving 3000 families annually, in a variety of linguistic and geographic communities.

Our partners in this conversation and presentation include the MCHB Intercultural Daycare located within the McCauley School, ABC Head Start, and the Edmonton Inner City Children’s Program (ICCP).

ABC Head Start has worked in the Boyle-McCauley community for over 25 years; while ICCP has been engaged in McCauley since 1995, providing quality recreational and educational programming to elementary aged children. ICCP’s programs allow inner-city children to play in a safe and supportive environment, and it is the only inner city agency providing these services for children within their own school setting.

Newly created and developed by parents and community, the MCHB Intercultural Daycare provides a culturally sensitive early childhood environment that affirms and celebrates first language and culture as a critical foundation for social and emotional well-being and future academic success.

Student and Family Needs

McCauley School serves the most vulnerable and marginalized of populations, including Aboriginal, immigrants and refugees from communities such as the Chinese, Eritrean/Ethiopian, Karen, Somali, and Vietnamese; as well as other children and families living on a low income.

15-20% of McCauley’s students come from Aboriginal families, often with multi-generational parenting situations. Aboriginal children face racism and societal barriers that limit their support network. They need a strong, stable, and secure community to realise their full potential.

50% of McCauley’s students are English Language Learners (ELL), most of whom are from immigrant and refugee families. These families often have a history of displacement and trauma, and have to rebuild social support networks. Their children need stable relationships, a sense of safety and acceptance, and a sense of community in order to engage in learning. The unique challenges they face in terms of adapting to an entirely new cultural context, learning a new language and navigating a new way of life take incredible energy and resilience.

Research shows that a critical factor in a student’s adjustment is their perception of acceptance in the school setting. Trauma experienced during flight, in refugee camps, or in resettlement causes many refugees to become distrustful and fearful of people in authority. This can also apply to Aboriginal students moving from First Nations to urban environments, and Aboriginal students in general because of the effects of colonization.

All students, regardless of their background, are positively affected by parental support. Parental support is maximized when parents are within walking distance of the school; and since many of these families work long hours and rely on public transportation, a strong effective school within walking distance will help the students and families succeed.

Closing McCauley School will severely impact the District’s ability to meet the unique needs of the children, youth and families who are attached to it.

Uniqueness of McCauley School

Parents say that McCauley school is a place that works for them because it provides many of the ingredients important to their children’s sense of acceptance and belonging, and ultimately their ability to learn. Population size allows the school to be relationship-based; staff know the students and their ethnocultural communities, including the kinds of supports that are needed for their students’ success.

Parents’ and communities’ strengths are recognized and utilized; parents work together to develop a network of supports for childcare, to get themselves to work and children to school on time.

McCauley school is a meeting place of different cultures and ethnic groups. It is a place where different groups come together formally and informally for support, to exchange ideas and share information.

The school is home to an intercultural daycare and an intercultural preschool, as well as after school care programming; all of which can be expanded and enhanced. It is a multi-use facility and a community hub, with various ethno cultural groups using the space on weeknights.

In addition, McCauley School has a vibrant music program. This could be leveraged by adding Art Start and intercultural programming; and thus facilitate school recruitment efforts.

A Model of Intercultural Excellence

EPSB has an unique opportunity right now to work with its’ partners and community to create a Centre of Intercultural Excellence at McCauley School.

From our involvement on the advisory committee for the Transitional Program, we know that plans are underway to develop and implement this program in the fall of 2010. We understand that sites have not yet been identified. We respectfully propose that there is a compelling rationale to designate McCauley School as one of the Transition Program sites, to be included within the Centre of Intercultural Excellence.

Preschool programming could be expanded by combining the present intercultural daycare and intercultural preschool program with ABC Head Start, and adding a regular EPSB preschool program. ICCP programming could be expanded to five days a week.

Community agencies are ready to co-locate (or continue co-location) to provide wrap around holistic support to students and families. MCHB, ICCP, ABC Head Start, Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Art Start (E4C), and immigrant communities with indigenous programming are strongly committed to work with EPSB and McCauley School maximise its’ potential and ensure student success.

Equity (not equality) is a guiding principal when considering the opportunity to develop a centre for intercultural excellence at McCauley. As the saying in the District goes, “inequality of resources creates equality of outcomes.” Equity is a concept embraced in the Multicultural policy that EPSB developed last June, and forms a moral obligation on the part of the District when making difficult resource allocation choices.